



Town of Groton, Connecticut

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter.

Tuesday, August 28, 2007

7:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

- Ledge Light Health District Update

Steve Mansfield and Jennifer Muggio from Ledge Light Health District reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on some of the activities at the District including their redesigned website (www.ledgelighthd.org).

4. Approval of Minutes

2007-0197 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole of August 14, 2007 and August 21, 2007 are hereby accepted and approved.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adopt.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Votes: In Favor: 8 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott and Councilor Streeter
Abstain: 1 - Councilor Sheets

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2003-0177 Renovations & Additions to Groton School Facilities - Phase I

Discussed

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, noted the Town has received bids for the technology components for the elementary schools. The bids were significantly higher (\$700,000-\$800,000) than budgeted (\$450,00 per school). There were three bidders for each category of components (computers, servers, A/V equipment). It appears that the three firms' bids migrated into the other categories which means there is some overlap in the cost. Staff will be meeting on Thursday with interested parties to analyze the bids line by line and to value engineer some items. The Town Manager noted that another bid may be required, but there would still be time to install the

equipment before the school opening. The Permanent School Building will not make any final decisions regarding cost overruns at Catherine Kolnaski School until this issue is worked out.

Councilor Bond asked how many students will have laptops and if leasing has been considered. She also asked if the Council could get copies of the specs. Discussion followed on potential budget shortfalls and cuts. Town Manager Oefinger offered to provide an update after Thursday's meeting.

2007-0027**Burnett's Corners****Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger noted that James Mitchell was once again unable to attend this meeting. Councilor Streeter noted this is the third invitation that Mr. Mitchell has declined.

A motion was made by Councilor Streeter, seconded by Councilor Scott, to direct the Town Manager to explore with the Town Attorney exercising the reversion clause for the Old Masonic Hall on Packer Road.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0140**Town Property at Buddington/Old Buddington Roads****Discussed**

Councilor O'Beirne asked why the Council needs to take action on this at this time. He feels this is the Town's last "bargaining chip" to obtain recreational access to the reservoir property. Councilor Scott suggested putting this item on the agenda for a joint meeting with the City of Groton.

2007-0194**Potential Renaming of Midway Oval Park**

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

Councilor Sheets asked that family members be invited to attend the Town Council meeting and that a formal presentation of the resolution be made.

2007-0191**Reuse of Groton Heights School****Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger has attempted to speak with interested parties including the Bill Memorial Library, whose board has not discussed reuse of their portion of the property, although they have expressed interest in working with the Town and increasing patronage of the library. Mayor Popp has indicated no specific City use, but he would want the City to be involved in any reuse committee. The Town Manager is still attempting to contact DEP.

Discussion followed on committee membership and the consensus of the Council was to ask the Town Manager to propose membership for a Groton Heights School Reuse Committee.

2007-0196**Agreement for Grant-Assisted Purchase of Hybrid Vehicles****Discussed**

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, applied for a state grant and received authorization to purchase four hybrid vehicles. The grant program pays for the cost differential between a regular vehicle and a hybrid vehicle. The fuel savings reported in Mr. Schneider's referral memo are actual savings that are tracked by the Town's fueling system. Councilor O'Beirne expressed concern with replacing vehicles early, and the Town Manager noted that the vehicles will not be replaced until the end of 2008, which is when the vehicles were originally scheduled to be replaced (FYE 09).

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Bartinik, Jr., that this matter be

Recommended for a Resolution.**The motion carried by the following vote:**

Votes: In Favor: 8 - Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter
Opposed: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

2007-0198 Town-Wide Property Maintenance Code**Discussed**

Town Manager Oefinger introduced Lee Treadway, the Town's Code Enforcement Officer. He noted that a Property Maintenance Code was applied to the Fort Hill Homes neighborhood and staff has been asked to provide an update on the experiences there in an effort to determine if a Property Maintenance Code should be applied Town-wide.

Michael Murphy, Director of Planning and Development, provided a brief history of the NRZ property maintenance code and inclusion of the concept in the Plan of Conservation and Development. He suggested that educational aspects be dealt with prior to instituting a Town-wide code.

Mr. Treadway noted the friendly but firm enforcement philosophy in the Town. In the case of the NRZ, the neighborhood requested the property maintenance code, which is more strict than zoning regulations. Mr. Treadway noted the effort made to address junk vehicles and he described specific examples in the neighborhood that are being addressed. Mr. Murphy stated that if a Town-wide code were to be implemented, he would need additional staff.

Discussion followed on the Town's shift from a reactive stance to a proactive one. Councilor Sheets suggested shelving this item until Mr. Treadway has more time to address outstanding issues in Town, and then have him provide an update for the Council.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Property Maintenance Code goes above and beyond zoning and deals with more aesthetic issues. The Town Council resolution modified the code in some areas. The Town Manager distributed copies of the Code to Councilors. He suggested that the Council can pick and choose sections of the Code if there are key areas the Council would like to concentrate on Town-wide.

Councilor Kolnaski would like to move this along since the process takes so long. The Town Manager recommended retaining the referral to give Councilors the opportunity to review the Code and discuss the issue further.

2007-0010 Joint Meeting with City Council (2007 Standing Referral)**Discussed**

Mayor Watson is waiting to hear from Mayor Popp to schedule a joint meeting sometime next month.

2007-0011 Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2007 Standing Referral)**Discussed**

The consensus of the Committee was to postpone a joint meeting until the school technology issue is addressed.

2007-0008 Legislative Policy (2007 Standing Referral)**Discussed**

Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent noted he needs a list of issues by September 12th for transmittal to CCM. Councilor O'Beirne described his two suggestions: a revision of state statutes to allow Town Council veto of Planning and Zoning Commission decisions, and exempting the RTM and Board of Education from the minority representation rule to provide full accountability

to the voters. Councilor Sheets noted that the Town of Groton Town Council is the only body in the state exempt from this rule.

Discussion followed on the suggestions, and information on minority representation was distributed by Councilor O'Beirne.

2007-0186 Town Manager Annual Evaluation

Discussed

A special meeting of the Committee of the Whole was scheduled for September 4th at 6:30 p.m. to discuss this item.

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Councilor Scott would like to see a regulation or ordinance regarding panhandling. The Town Manager noted that the Town Attorney is looking into this issue and staff is expecting a report in the near future. Mayor Watson made a referral to Committee of the Whole.

Councilor Scott requested a referral regarding Old Mystic Fire Department FOI issues and meeting procedures. The consensus of the Committee was to wait for the FOI ruling.

Councilor Scott noted new state legislation regarding tax breaks for hybrid vehicles. Mayor Watson made a referral to the Environment and Recreation Committee.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Sheets, to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

The motion carried unanimously.